Keeping in Touch

June 1997

Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

THE STATE OF THE FELLOWSHIP: A HISTORY OF CONTINUOUS GROWTH

UP FRONT

Rev. Elder Don Eastman
Strategic Growth Initiative

As we gather for our historic General Conference XVIII in Australia, UFMCC will also celebrate a continuous history of growth. At a time when many Christian denominations are losing 2% of their membership per year, UFMCC membership has grown by more than 6% in each of the last six years.

And since the Rev. Elder Troy Perry issued his call in 1993 to "double in a decade," UFMCC has welcomed 10,000 new members and adherents to our worldwide inclusive membership.

As of May 1, 1997 the UFMCC has grown to 86 Chartered churches, 100 Commissioned churches and 99 New or Special Works for an official total of 285 church bodies in 15 countries.

According to the latest statistics, growth is coming from almost every area of UFMCC ministry. The Cathedral of Hope MCC (Dallas, TX), under the pastoral leadership of the Rev. Michael Piazza, has doubled in size since 1993 and this month will pass the 2000 mark in membership.

Pike's Peak MCC (Colorado Springs, CO), an active participant in UFMCC's Strategic Growth Initiative, has grown by more than 300% since Elder Perry's challenge, from 30 members to more than 100 under the pastoral leadership of the Rev. Nori Rost

Much of UFMCC's recent growth is also attributable to our international churches, especially those in South Africa.

In fact, since 1993, 22 MCC congregations have already doubled in membership, and another 30 are on track to double, having already grown by 40% or more.

UFMCC's International inclusive membership (including active members and adherents) has grown to approximately 42,000. Adherents are those who regularly attend an MCC but are not active voting members. In most MCCs, this represents at least half the congregation. Confirmed active voting membership of church bodies in the USA (as reported to the Board of Pensions and/or administrative offices) at the end of 1996 is 17,196. By comparison, with 15,581 members in 1994, this represents a membership growth of 10.37% during the past two years. Membership reported to the administrative offices for districts outside the United States is Eastern Canadian District, 561; European District, 550; Australian District, 191; and, Global Outreach, 2590 (Argentina, 30; Mexico, 150, New Zealand, 75; Nigeria, 1,500; Philippines, 50; Puerto Rico, 35; South Africa, 750).

UFMCC's Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) is providing assistance and resources to churches with a vision for growth. The SGI has selected target churches for consultation on strategic planning, leadership development and resources for growth. Each target church is engaged in a three-year process of planning, implementing and evaluating its own visionary growth initiative. An important goal of the SGI process with the first ten target churches is development of models which will be instructive and useful to other Metropolitan Community Churches.

Experience with the first ten target churches reveals that four strategic issues are critical to churches with a vision for growth: 1) Attracting, assimilating and actualizing new members into ministry, 2) achieving or increasing excellence in celebrative worship and music, 3) improving levels of participation in stewardship, including increased financial commitments, and, 4) developing appropriate structures, systems and staffing effective for growth.

We salute visionary women and men across our denomination who's bold vision and commitment to reaching our communities with a message of spiritual hope and affirmation are leading the way for UFMCC to become the "Church for the 21st Century."

Growing UFMCC: Churches who have participated in the Strategic Growth Initiative, such as MCC Tampa, left, are experiencing phenomenal growth. Cathedral of Hope MCC in Dallas, below, is rapidly approaching the 2,000-member milestone.

EXCEL TRAVELS TO SOUTH AFRICA

Jerry Reitz
Excel of the Armadillo, Houston

This past year 1996, there was a dream of Keith Apple, Executive Director of Excel International to take EXCEL to our churches in South Africa. After discussions with the Rev. Andre Muller, Pastor of The Reforming Church MCC, Pretoria, the wheels were set into motion for an Excel weekend. Keith sent word to all teams seeking those interested in coordinating and participating such a weekend. The Excel of the Armadillo team in Houston, Texas, accepted the challenge and Jerry Reitz, with the Armadillo team, volunteered to coordinate the effort of putting together a "suitcase team." After many months of communication and planning, a team was formed. The team was comprised of: Keith Apple, Exec. Director Excel International.; Jeff Barnhart, Moderator of the Executive Committee; Richard Beattie, team member of Excel of the Lakes, Detroit, Michigan; Bill Brees, Excel of the Redwoods, San Francisco, Calf.; Rev. Carolyn Mobley, Assoc. Pastor MCCR, Houston, Texas; Janet Roe, Excel of the Armadillo, Houston, TX.; Jim Winslett, Excel of the Armadillo, Houston, TX and Jerry Reitz, team member of Excel of the Armadillo, Houston, TX.

Praise God for telecommunications and e-mail! Through this wonderful media, communications were established with a representative of The Reforming Church MCC, Pretoria, Mr. Andries Jourbert who coordinated the efforts of putting together a weekend in Africa. Not only did Andries provide support for our efforts in Africa but also the Rev. Andre Muller and the Rev. Sue Wellman, pastor of DeoGloria MCC assisted in providing their support and encouragement for members of their respective congregations to attend the first ever Excel weekend in their wonderful country. A special thanks also goes to the Rev. Judy Dahl, UFMCC Global Outreach Ministry who traveled to Houston, TX in January to provide a workshop for team members on the history of MCC in South Africa and the phenomenal growth that is occurring in that land. Through the efforts and resources provided by members and friends of Excel and MCC of the Resurrection, the team was able to raise $1,700 for expenses necessary to ship team supplies, applications, equipment, posters, etc. to conduct an Excel weekend. This was truly a blessing and an answer to prayer since the cost for airfare alone to South Africa per person was approximately $ 1,200.

EXCEL in South Africa: The Excel team from Houston, Texas held a first-ever weekend in South Africa.

The first EXCEL Weekend was held March 21-23, 1997 at Elim Kamp, 65 km outside Pretoria. God provided 25 men and women from the two MCC churches in Pretoria to attend this weekend, along with 6 wonderful women from the Reforming Church MCC who comprised our Kitchen Team. So there you have it! 25 participants, 6 wonderful cooks, and 8 team members worshiping together, praying, studying and acting together at an Excel weekend.

Words cannot express the feelings, emotions, love and gifts of hospitality that were shared with those of us traveling to one of the most beautiful lands on the planet. The people who we encountered at this weekend were gracious beyond words and the feeling of family really does exist within our fellowship. Our team also had the privilege of worshiping with our two congregations in Pretoria Palm Sunday evening. Both congregations were just wonderful! Speaking for the team and myself, we would not have missed this opportunity to experience spiritual cruising' (a term spoken by Andre Muller) for anything this world has to offer. We not only shared the Excel message of "living in Union with God" but were fed ourselves with love and friendships from some of the most gracious people that we have ever met. I thank God for this opportunity to have served through Excel!

REV. MICHAEL MOFFETT

Rev. Michael Moffett of London, England died on April 24, 1997. His mother died two weeks before in Manchester. He went home for the funeral where he fell sick. He was rushed to the hospital where they found several forms of advanced cancer. Rev. Elder Jean White was able to go to Manchester and spend a day with him before he passed over. Please keep all of his friends and family in your prayers.

REV. SHEILA KUHN

Rev. Sheila Kuhn passed away on Monday, May 5th following a two year battle with cancer. She had completed her academics for UFMCC ministry and was serving her internship at Church of the Holy Spirit MCC in Des Moines, IA. Sheila was ordained on April 25th in a bedside ceremony. Originally from Logansport, Indiana, she had lived in Des Moines since 1978. Sheila was 45, an army veteran of Vietnam and Gulf wars. She leaves behind her spouse of eleven years, Barney , and four siblings. It is Sheila and Barney's wish that ordination/ memorial gifts may be made to the Mountain and Plains District to establish a student clergy scholarship fund.

SAMARITAN ANNOUNCES DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAM

The Samaritan Institute for Religious Studies, the professional school of the UFMCC, announced today a formalized dual enrollment program with the Pacific School of Religion (PSR). This program is the second of its kind in which openly gay and lesbian people who are training for the ministry have access to non-homophobic theological education. The students will have access to the Samaritan Institute for Religious Studies and to an accredited Master of Divinity program through PSR.

This program of cooperation will make it possible for UFMCC students to work simultaneously for a Master of Divinity Degree at the Pacific School of Religion while completing studies required for ordination in the UFMCC. Samaritan, founded in 1970, is the only institution in the world dedicated solely to gay and lesbian theological education. Samaritan is an educational environment promoting religious activism and cultural liberation anchored in spirituality. For additional information, you may contact SIRS by e-mail at SamInst@aol.com.

WORKSHOPS IN SYDNEY INFORM AND INSPIRE

Nathan Meckley

While at General Conference there are more than thirty workshops which will help you develop skills for ministry and provide opportunities to discuss issues critical to UFMCC. In the last issue of *Keeping in Touch*, several were highlighted, and there are even more you'll want to know about!

"Is AIDS a Dead Issue?" Rev. Nancy

Wilson will facilitate an open discussion on AIDS ministry on a local and denominational level. What do you think needs to happen? What do you want the Elders to hear?

Dr. Don Carrington, Director of Urban Discipleship of Paramatta Mission, serving Sydney's Greater West, will lead a panel, "Ministering In Multicultural Australia." Don has lived and worked with indigenous peoples and Islanders of the Pacific for most of his life, and he will facilitate dialogue with a panel of guests speaking from different cultural perspectives Explore Australia as a diverse multicultural society and consider the ways in which these varying contexts challenge ministry. How does the Australian church respond to ethnic diversity?

"New Insights on Homosexuality and the Bible" will be shared by the Rev. Dr. Mona West, Dean of Samaritan Institute for Religious Studies.

There will be two opportunities (one for registrants only) to consider "Gays/Lesbians: Long-term Survivors of Society's Sexualizing." Dr. Lo Sprague, a Doctor of Clinical Psychology and Certified Psychodrama Practitioner, will help participants look at the gay/lesbian community in the context of "sexualizing" - an environment that collapses all your roles except the sexual.

"Soul Force: International" will be a dramatic review of the current state of injustice in our various nations and how to do justice locally and internationally for UFMCC facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Mel White, UFMCC Minister of Justice.

Do you want more people involved in your church? How can you expand avenues to engage lay people into fulfilling ministries? Ms. JoNee Shelton, Chair of UFMCC Commission on the Laity will present "Mentoring Laity Out of the Pew and Into Ministry."

Mr. Jim Birkitt, UFMCC Communications Director, will share proven successful techniques for developing public relations and marketing strategies for the local church in "Guerilla Marketing Strategies: How to Publicize Your Church, Gain Media Attention, and Reach The Unchurched." Come prepared to share your own success stories!

You will not want to miss the special technology workshop on Friday afternoon. From websites to chat rooms, the Rev. David Farrell, Beverly Mitzel, Sparkle Clark and Mark Hahn will present a vision for use of technology in the UFMCC and steps your local church can take toward that vision.

Between business, worship and sightseeing in Sydney, remember that Conference workshops are a place to learn and share to enhance ministry. For a complete workshop listing ask your local church delegates to share the preliminary schedule included in their Conference business packet. Workshop descriptions are included in the on-site program. Verification of workshop attendance will be available to meet the continuing education requirements for UFMCC clergy.

HISTORIC GENERAL CONFERENCE AT HAND IN AUSTRALIA

Excitement over General Conference XVIII to be held in Sydney, Australia continues to grow — literally from around the world! We are amazed at the world-wide attention our upcoming conference is receiving. A group of Japanese gay Christians has contacted UFMCC HQ to learn more about affiliating with UFMCC and has expressed interest in attending the Sydney Conference. A gay Christian from Zimbabwe (site of terrible gay persecution) read about General Conference and has written for information and registration forms, as have Christians from Singapore. Together, we will demonstrate the words of Christ, "You are the light of the world."

Key issues at General Conference XVIII will include adoption of our mission, vision, and core value statements, adoption of our denomination's new ministry priorities, action on proposed by-laws changes, and action on a proposal to transition General Conference from a biennial event to a triennial format.

The Australians are leading an exciting social justice campaign to obtain a

■ **Hands-on help:** Past Conference workshops, like one led by Marsha Raulston, right, are opportunities to become better informed in the business of your church. Rev. Mel White, below, will present his "Soul Force" workshop in Sydney.

A Fellowship of **Activity**

Rev. Ron Helms of Open Arms MCC, Rochester, NY, was recently renamed to Congresswoman Louise Slaughter's Religious Leaders Advisory Committee for the 28th U.S. Congressional District. ■ Members of Joie de Vivre MCC in Baton Rouge, LA played a key role in the defeat of a proposed constitutional amendment that would have banned same-sex marriages. Dr. Don Clarke, pastor, spoke before the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Tom Merrill, member of the church's Peace and Justice Ministry, led a massive postcard campaign. Their efforts were successful, and the proposed amendment failed by two votes. ■ Angels of Hope MCC of Green Bay, WI, began a parish-extension in Appleton on May 18th. Worship services will be held at 110 So. Locust, just off College Avenue at the 700 block. The worship will be on Sunday evenings at 5:00 PM. ■ Renaissance MCC has been approved as a Parish Extension of MCC Washington. It has been formed by a core group of 12 people from what was MCC of the Disciples. ■ Resurrection MCC, Chicago, IL, has developed a three year plan "Resurrection 2000" as part of their participation in the UFMCC Strategic Growth Initiative program. ■ Church of Our Savior MCC, Boca Raton, FL has found a new home and the congregation voted overwhelmingly for the acquisition. They plan to make the move in June. ■ MCC San Diego, CA, will install James Bell as their full-time Director of Celebration on June 1st. James was previously the Praise Coordinator at the Sunshine Cathedral MCC in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. ■ Twenty-four years ago on Gay Pride Sunday, the Upstairs Bar in New Orleans burned with dozens of people inside. On Sunday, June 29 at 4:15 PM, Vieux Carre' MCC will hold a memorial service at the corner of Chartres and Iberville, the site of the arson. All are invited to attend this service. ■ MCC Montgomery has a new name — MCC New Hope — and they have been reporting steady growth and a renewed spirit. ■ MCC Seattle, WA, has completed a move to their new home in the Russian Community

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conference visa for Pastor Maduka of Nigeria. Magazines and newspapers — both in the US and internationally — have carried articles on the upcoming conference. It is our prayer that God will use this conference — and the significant worldwide attention it is receiving — to share our message of spiritual hope and justice, to reach many people with the Good News, and to launch a new wave of growth throughout UFMCC.

DIFFERENCES OF EXPERIENCE

HIV/AIDS

Rev. Steve Pieters
Director, HIV/AIDS Ministry

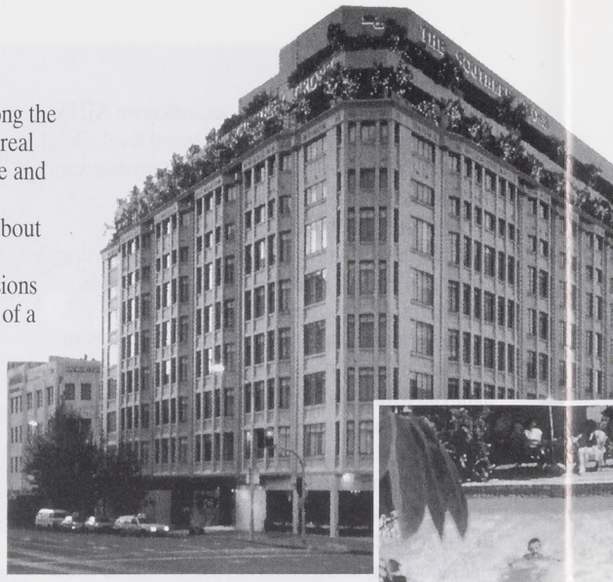
Holy Covenant MCC in Hinsdale, IL recently held a men's workshop in which we discussed spiritual issues for gay and bisexual men, particularly as it relates to our sexuality. Hinsdale is a quiet suburb of Chicago, and the members of Holy Covenant MCC come from many towns in the suburban and rural areas outside Chicago. It was interesting to compare this workshop with a similar retreat weekend at MCC San Francisco.

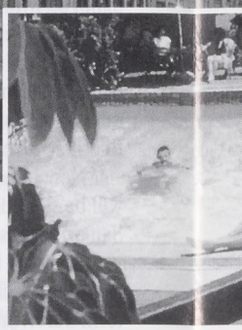
In leading the afternoon session, I used a number of exercises from the men's retreat at MCC San Francisco, led by Eric Rofes and Rev. Jim Mitulski. The two groups were quite a contrast in background. While the men of MCC San Francisco had a fairly diverse experience of being inhabitants of one of the primary gay urban centers, a number (but not all!) of the men of Holy Covenant MCC were more closeted. Some stated they had no desire to be part of an organized or urban gay neighborhood.

There were differences in the experience of HIV/AIDS in the two groups of men. Among the San Francisco men, many of the men had a real depth of experience both with urban gay life and with AIDS. There was a lot of ease in self-disclosing HIV status and talking in detail about sex and sexuality, perhaps reflecting the abundance of opportunities for such discussions in San Francisco. There was the perception of a real change in living with HIV: no one's life seemed consumed with caring for a sick loved one. It was pointedly noted that there are far fewer funerals and obituaries.

In Hinsdale, there was not the same level of relief or self-disclosure. One member of the community had recently died from HIV's complications, and there are others who are sick and in need. The men of the Hinsdale church seemed much hungrier for a specific discussion of HIV-related issues. There was less self-disclosing, although there were a few who modeled comfort in talking about their HIV status and their sex lives.

More interesting were the similarities between these contrasting groups of gay men. In both groups, there were men who stated, "No one's asked us these questions before." There was an enthusiastic appreciation for the opportunity to talk openly about sexuality. There was a general consensus that the AIDS pandemic may be shifting, but it is not over. There was a genuine consciousness that not everyone is benefitting from protease inhibitors for a variety of reasons, as well as awareness that safe sex and prevention education is still needed among gay men.





Conference digs: The Southern Cross, one of the Sydney hotels which will roll out the red carpet for General Conference guests.

I was most struck with the shared hunger and enthusiasm for men talking with men about these issues, at whatever level the men were willing to talk. To this end, UFMCC AIDS Ministry is formulating a guide to conducting a men's workshop on sexuality, spirituality, and HIV status. You can learn all about it at General Conference in Sydney in July!

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

JUSTICE

Rev. Dr. Mel White
Minister of Justice

I've only been an MCCer for eight years, but I've been around long enough to know that our Universal Fellowship stands at an historic crossroads. While our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered community struggles against injustice (in North America and abroad) we have re-committed ourselves to a justice ministry that is permanent (new world headquarters in West Hollywood, California) and international (General Conference XVIII in Sydney, Australia).

For almost three decades, now, our beloved founder, Troy Perry, and an impressive list of courageous and committed elders, district coordinators, pastors and lay leaders have risked their lives and sacrificed their resources to build a Fellowship that now embraces congregants in 300 churches in 15 different nations. In spite of our 42,000 official members, I believe the people we've touched, straight and gay alike, number in the hundreds of thousands.

Now, the question is clear. Where do we go from here?

On April 17, I spoke at the Christ Community Church in Spring Lake, Michigan, the third largest Reformed Church in America.

Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection
Houston, Texas
Announces

Full-Time Position

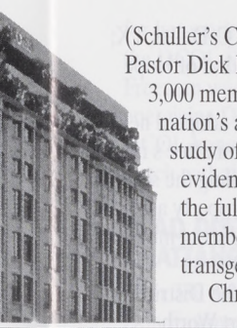
Assistant Pastor/Director of Small Groups

Develop and implement cell groups.
Ideal Candidate:
- College Degree
- Leadership Experience with 1000-Member Church (Any Denomination)
- Two years Experience with UFMCC
- Expertise in the Development and Implementation of Cell Groups

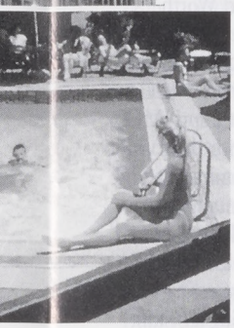
Please submit letter of interest and resume by May 31, 1997 to:

Staff Development
MCCR
1919 Decatur
Houston, TX 77007-7698

(Schuller's Crystal Cathedral is the largest.) Under Pastor Dick Rhem, this amazing church with its 3,000 members has voted to ignore it's denomination's anti-gay rulings. After a thorough study of the Biblical, theological, and scientific evidences, Christ Community decided to offer the full rights and responsibilities of membership to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered Christians.



Christ Community has also been the place of sanctuary for our UFMCC congregation in Spring Lake. At an open forum, Pastor Rhem asked me, "Why should the handful of MCCers' who worship by themselves on Sunday evening in our chapel not join us in full membership now that we are an open and affirming congregation?"



I answered easily, proud of our Fellowship. "We are the largest Christian denomination in the world with a primary outreach to lesbians and gays," I replied. "We have a new world headquarters in West Hollywood and we are about to celebrate our 18th General Conference in Sydney, Australia."

"But there is a place for them to meet now," Pastor Rhem said later in a frank and private exchange. "What shape will your Fellowship take now that large and well-equipped congregations all across the nation are opening the doors to the very people you have served so well?"

Isn't that the question we must double and triple our efforts to answer at our new headquarters in West Hollywood, at our Conference in Sydney, and every other place we gather to think and pray? What new shape will our Fellowship take now?

When Troy invited that first handful of despised and disposed lesbian and gay Christians to worship in his living room 28 years ago, there was no open and affirming' movement. UFMCC has bridged the gap. We provided sanctuary to our sisters and brothers who had no other place to worship openly. Now, they do, thousands of them.

Where to from here? A new wind is blowing.

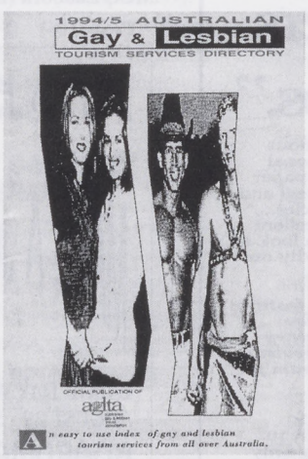
On April 7, in Madison, Wisconsin, after conducting a citywide 'soul force' seminar, I met with 35 ministers at the First Congregational Church to share our UFMCC justice vision. I asked them to help us end the suffering, to write and sign "A Madison Declaration" admitting their sinfulness in excluding lesbian and gay Christians from their churches, welcoming God's gay children back to full participation in those churches. I didn't think they would do it. They did! I received that "Madison Declaration" today signed by 80 clergy and lay leaders. You can read the full text on our JusticeNET page (www.melwhite.org).

There really is a new wind blowing. It is the Spirit of God answering our UFMCC prayers for justice on behalf of God's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered children. God has heard our prayers. Now, in the light of that new wind blowing, what shape will our Fellowship take in the years ahead? What sacrifices will we as the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches have to make to do justice for God's gay children now?

A WELCOME TO NICK COMAN

The friendly voice you now hear when calling UFMCC Headquarters is Nick Coman, our new front desk person and receptionist. He replaces Catherine Houchins, who has returned to Virginia to be closer to her ailing parents. Nick, who brings a strong commitment to customer service, has a varied background of experience in non-profit youth services, substance abuse counseling and costume design. He is a member of the MCCLA congregation where he serves on volunteer staff as the church's social events

■ **Historic opening:** The historic Sydney Town Hall is the site of opening festivities at General Conference. For help in finding other points of interest, there are several local community publications that highlight tourism services especially for the lesbian/gay visitor to Sydney.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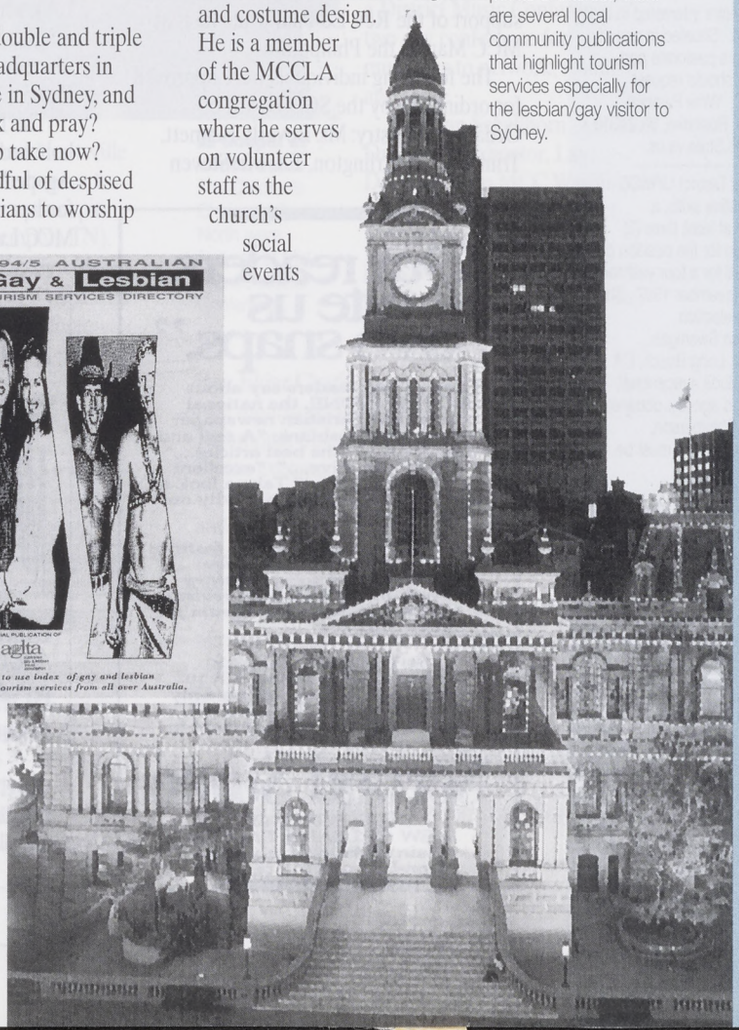
An easy to use index of gay and lesbian tourism services from all over Australia.



A Fellowship of **Activity**

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Center on Capital Hill. ■ MCC New Haven, CT, recently had 75 people in attendance at a special service where the Rev. Troy Perry shared his vision for the future. ■ Good Shepherd Parish MCC, Chicago, IL, celebrated their 27th Anniversary in May. ■ Rev. Steve Torrance, pastor of MCC Key West, FL, was recently selected "Citizen of the Year" by the business community of Key West. ■ MCC Nashville, TN, had installation services for Rev. Denise Leopold as their new pastor and also moved into a new worship location in April. ■ Diablo Valley MCC (Walnut Creek, CA) has changed it's name to MCC of the New Vision. ■ Rev. Sharon Sloat was elected as the new pastor of MCC of Omaha, NE. ■ Rev. Michael Nikolaus (Miami, FL) was awarded a Master of Arts Degree in Pastoral Ministry from St. Thomas University at commencement ceremonies on May 17th. ■ Please celebrate with Theresa Lopez and Kathi Beall, St. Jude's MCC, Wilmington, NC, who have received their final order for adoption of their daughter, Grace Shakeya Lopez-Beall. May God be praised for the miracle of "Amazing Grace" in our midst!

PRAYERS

For the family of Rev. Grant Ford, pastor of Sunshine Cathedral MCC, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, who's father passed away on May 8th. ■ For the family of Rev. Yolanda Vierra-Allen, co-pastor of Mother River Spirit, Oakland, CA, who's last surviving grandfather recently passed away. ■ For the family of Rev. Gordon McCoy, of Church of the Resurrection MCC, Chicago, IL, in the death of his mother. ■ For the family and friends of Rev. Michael Moffett of Manchester, England, who died of cancer on April 24th. (See obituary in this issue) ■ For the family and friends of Rev. Sheila Kuhn of Des Moines, IA, who died of cancer on May 5th. (See obituary in this issue). ■ Keep Rev. Harry Stock of Washington, DC, in your

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CLASSIFIED

First Metropolitan Community Church of Atlanta invites application for the full-time position of Senior Pastor. First MCC is the largest of three MCC Churches in Atlanta, which is home to over 200,000 gay, lesbian and transgendered persons. Interested UFMCC ordained clergy should submit a resume, a videotape of a recent sermon presentation, and three letters of reference to: Pastoral Search Committee, First MCC Atlanta, 1379 Tullie Rd., Atlanta, GA 30329. Applications will be accepted through August 15, 1997. All applications will be held in strictest confidence.

ELLEN FANS! Win autographed copy of original script 4/30 episode. Raffle. Tickets $1 each; 7 for $5, 15 for $10. Mail checks and S.A.S.E. to MCC in The Country, 3901 Manzanita Dr., Box C, San Diego, CA. 92105-4503. Drawing 7/27.

MCC Tampa - Director of Celebrative Worship. A growth oriented church vested in the fellowship's Strategic Growth Initiative process is seeking a part-time Director of Celebrative Worship to plan, organize, and develop the activities involved in music and worship. Person will coordinate with Senior Pastor and recruit and empower others to contribute to the worship experience. Attractive compensation package offered. All responses confidential. Deadline for application requests is August 1, 1997. MCC Tampa, 408 E. Cayuga St., Tampa, FL 33603. (813) 239-1951, Fax (813) 239-2018, e-mail: UFMCCTAMPA@aol.com. Packets will be available at UFMCC General Conference. Please contact Carol Hale at Conference.

Assistant Pastor - MCC of the Rockies, Denver, CO, is now accepting resumes and letters of interest for a full-time position with benefits. Primary areas of responsibility are supervision of lay pastoral care programs, community outreach, and development of cell groups. UFMCC ordination preferred, M.Div. preferred. Please inquire by July 1 to 960 Clarkson Street, Denver, Colorado, 80218.

SAVE UP TO 80% on dental, vision, & prescriptions. Community friendly. $15 monthly per household. For free information call 1-888-711-2742 PIN 0949.

BROKERS NEEDED Full, part time. Excellent commissions & training. Own your business & help our community. Call 1-888-711-2742 PIN 0949 for free information.

Lead us Into the 21st Century! Seeking Spirit-filled pastor interested in a long-term commitment to our spiritually-diverse church. Situated in one of the most beautiful locations in America, we are offering a pastorate part-time with benefits. Self-motivated, credentialed clergy should request pastoral search application packet by August 31, 1997. Write Pastoral Search Team, MCC of the Blue Ridge, P.O. Box 20495, Roanoke, VA 24018 - or request packet by e-mail at KHGFILL@roanoke.vdh.State.va.us.

DISTRICT COORDINATOR POSITION The Southwest District UFMCC seeks a person with successful pastoral and administrative skills, a minimum of three (3) years experience in UFMCC, and at least three (3) years experience in successful organizational leadership for the position of District Coordinator. Position will begin January 1, 1998 for a four year term and will be filled by election at District Conference in November 1997. The current District Coordinator is expected to stand for re-election. Applications will be sent upon request from Ms. Theresa Swanigan, Nominations Chairperson, 2851 San Francisco Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90806; (562) 427-2287. Note: All applications must include a recent full criminal and credit background check from an approved agency, obtained at the applicant's expense, and sent separately to the Chairperson, Southwest District BOM. Applications and background checks must be received no later than September 1, 1997.

CALL FOR CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERS Are you planning to come to General Conference in Sydney? We need a few hours of your time to volunteer. Ushers, pages, and assistants of all sorts (skilled and unskilled) are needed to make every General Conference a success. Just like in your local church, those who get the most out of it are those who get involved! Please request a volunteer form from the UFMCC offices at: UFMCC, 8704 Santa Monica Blvd., 2nd floor, W. Hollywood, CA 90069; or download one from our website at http://www.ufmcc.com.

MCC Chattanooga, a thirty member congregation serving Southeastern Tennessee, Northwest Georgia, and Northeast Alabama, seeks UFMCC clergy for half-time position. Pastoral and human relationship skills and a sensitivity to an evangelical environment, diverse community, and varied styles of worship are essential. A history of lay leadership means that our members are able to offer strong support in religious education and preaching. All interested parties please respond to Search Committee, MCC Chattanooga, 1601 Foust Street, Chattanooga, TN 37404. Closing date for applications is August 1st.

coordinator and facilitator of the mens group. Originally from Colorado, he has been in Southern California for 13 years. He notes drily, "I think I'll stay." We hope so, too. Welcome, Nick.

SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT HOSTS CONFERENCE

Eleanor Neely

What a weekend! May 1-4, 1997, 370 folks from every congregation in the South Central District gathered for four days of dynamic preaching, varied workshops, talented musical ministry from around the district — and a business meeting that will be hard to top for its efficiency and collegiality!

For the first time, children's programming was available throughout the conference. The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson preached the closing worship service and facilitated workshops on local church ecumenical relations and the future of HIV/AIDS Ministries within MCC.

The weekend also featured a focus on Global Outreach with the Rev. Judy Dahl, Administrator of Global Outreach, and Sr. Pablo Navarro Hernandez, pastor of ICM Cristo Sanador, San Juan Puerto Rico, participating in worship and workshops. In addition, the conference raised funds for the support of the Rev. Ed Paul while he is at MCC Manila, the Philippines.

The following individuals were approved for ordination by the SCD Board of Ordained Ministry: Ms. Beverly Bennett, Trinity MCC, Arlington, TX; Mr. Steven Horlica, Cathedral of Hope MCC, Dallas, TX; and Mr. Durrell Watkins, Cathedral of Hope MCC, Dallas, TX.

In other business, the district adopted new SOP's, affirmed the District Committee's intent to proceed with building and selling the second house on the Lawrence Place property as part of the process of building up a district ministry endowment, and affirmed the District Committee's intent to relocate the District Office to the Greater Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex.

Three congregations received awards for excellence in ministry. Both Harvest MCC, Denton, TX, and Eglise du Saint Esprit MCC, Lafayette, LA were recognized for their vision and courage in the face of discrimination and homophobia in their local communities. Central Texas MCC From the Heart received an award for their leadership role in Waco, Texas' first Gay Pride March last year.

Mr. Bernard Barbour, outgoing assistant district coordinator, received the Dr. Tom Reveley Award for outstanding lay leadership. Having served in various local and fellowship level leadership roles, Mr. Barbour will be leaving the district this summer to begin UFMCC clergy formation studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

Other awards were presented to Tom Merrill of Joie de Vivre MCC (Baton Rouge, LA), who has served his congregation in roles ranging from preaching to yard care. He recently retired from a five-year term as District Treasurer.

The District Commission on the Laity also honored three individuals. Myra Thornton of Agape MCC (Ft. Worth, TX) was recognized for her work in church music. Mattie Tippit of MCC Lubbock (Lubbock, TX) was honored

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LABOR DAY WEEKEND --
AUGUST 29 - SEPTEMBER 1, 1997
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BOARDMAN OREGON CAMPGROUND

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524 Almond Street, Nampa, Idaho 83686
E-mail: MLEETAYLOR@aol.com

for her work as a lay delegate and her service on the DCOL Steering Committee. And Mary Coile-Freeman was recognized for her efforts in energizing DCOL ministry programs. Each of the DCOL honorees received a framed certificate and a watch with the South Central District's logo.

GLAD DISTRICT GATHERS FOR CHATTANOOGA CONFERENCE

Over 350 delegates and guests heard the Rev. Elder Don Eastman call for a New Pentecost to "Revive Us Again" as he brought the sermon at the Saturday Night Worship of the Gulf Lower Atlantic District Spring Conference in Chattanooga, TN. The Conference, "One In The Spirit," (May 2-4) also heard from the Rev. Dr. Erin Swenson, a transgendered person who is ordained in the Presbyterian Church and the Rev. Mick Hinson, pastor of MCC Greenville. Writer, attorney and domestic violence activist, Kathy Skaggs, spoke at the conference dinner Friday night. Saturday's speakers included University of Tennessee students, Genny Reardon, and identical twins, Jeremy and Jason Cartwright, as they discussed ways MCC can play a role in campus life. Music Director, Gary Estep, MCC Huntsville, capped an outstanding weekend program of music with the conference massed choir performing the "Hallelujah Chorus." The award for the congregation with the most registrants went to All Saints MCC and Huntsville MCC, both of whom tied with 21. The banner for the highest number of registrants on a per capita basis went to Safe Harbor MCC (Memphis, TN). District Coordinator Rev. Jay Neely praised MCC Chattanooga, the host congregation, as well as MCC Huntsville and MCC Knoxville for their assistance with the Conference.

Gospel at conference: The Children's Choir and David North were featured at Mid-Atlantic District Conference.

"LEADERSHIP 2000" CAPTURES MID-ATLANTIC CONFERENCE

The theme of the Mid-Atlantic District Conference in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, "Leadership 2000," captured the hearts and spirit of this conference. With special guest Wendy Foxworth, the leadership of the Mid Atlantic District was challenged to be a viable, relevant church fully prepared to enter the 21st century at this May gathering.

We explored how our district can effectively reach another 2,000 people in the next few years. We also focused on ways to strengthen our church of today while discovering new ways to reach out to others and to plant even more churches.

This was the largest District Conference in the history of our District with 251 registered attendees. For the first time two new churches received our attendance banners: Appalachian MCC (Charleston, WV) won the highest percentage of members in attendance banner and MCC Washington won with the most people registered for the conference banner.

Three new upcoming events are an outgrowth of this District Conference: A Church Planting Summit, a one day gathering for those churches looking to intentionally plant a new church within the next two years within the District; a Children's Ministry Summit, a one day gathering of those involved in or planing a children's ministry; and a District Music Conference, a two day conference for musicians to network, resource and share.

Mr. Dan Schellhorn, Assistant District Coordinator, Lay Delegate from MCC Washington and facilitator of the District Education Program, was presented a special award from the District Commission on the Laity.

We were blessed to have had Rev. Elder Charlie Arehart in our District over the past months serving as the Interim Pastor of MCC Richmond. Charlie was our guest preacher on Friday evening. David North and the Gospel Celebration with special guest Rev. Delores Berry and other guest performers presented a powerful gospel concert. The spirit is truly alive in the Mid Atlantic District.

This conference is the first in a four-year series of conferences on Leadership 2000. Our next conference is Nov. 14 - 15, in Laurel, MD with the Rev. Elder Don Eastman focusing on "Mobilizing For Ministry."

April 24 - 25, 1998 our guest speaker noted church growth historian and author Dr. Lyle E. Schaller focusing on Leadership 2000: Pioneering for the 21st Century.

prayers as he begins his leave of absence from active ministry after 13 years of service. ■ Prayers for Rev. Charlie Lott who's lover, Vee, died suddenly while they were at the Mountains and Plains District Conference on April 2nd. Spirit of Hope MCC, Kansas City, MO, did a wonderful memorial service on April 19. ■ Prayers for the New Group in Grand Forks, ND, who lost their meeting space and many members homes during the recent floods.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

July 13-15 - Northwest District Conference to be held in Waikiki, Hawaii at the Outrigger Prince Kuhio; the theme for the Conference is "In My Parent's House, There are Many Rooms". Special guest speakers will be Elder Larry Rodriguez, and Rev. Steve Pieters, both from Los Angeles, CA. All registrations received by July 1 will include two meals and a Luau hosted by the host church Ke Anuenue O Ke Aloha MCC, Honolulu.

Keeping In Touch June 1997

The monthly publication of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, a church of the lesbian and gay community, open to all. Our mission is to call people to new life through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, confront injustice through Christian social action, and create a community of healing and reconciliation. *Keeping in Touch* may be freely copied for distribution in UFMCC. Portions may be reprinted in UFMCC church publications, with attribution. For other distribution, please request permission. Subscription free upon request. Send address changes, news, and ideas to:
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Deadline for each issue is the 10th of prior month.

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TOP 20 TITHES - APRIL 1997

1.	MCC of the Resurrection, Houston, TX	$4,841.19
2.	MCC Washington, Washington, DC	$2,656.93
3.	King of Peace MCC, St. Petersburg, FL	$2,493.26
4.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA	$2,385.70
5.	MCC San Diego, San Diego, CA	$1,834.48
6.	MCC San Francisco, San Francisco, CA	$1,460.37
7.	St. John's MCC, Raleigh, NC	$1,321.66
8.	River City MCC, Sacramento, CA	$1,303.76
9.	Joy MCC, Orlando, FL	$1,272.59
10.	Maranatha Fellowship MCC, Houston, TX	$1,245.81
11.	MCC New York, New York City, NY	$1,242.36
12.	MCC of the Rockies, Denver, CO	$1,157.39
13.	MCC Charleston, Charleston, SC	$1,111.59
14.	First MCC of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA	$1,098.46
15.	MCC Tampa, Tampa, FL	$1,073.10
16.	Harvest MCC, Denton, TX	$1,054.08
17.	Agape' MCC, Fort Worth, TX	$1,016.90
18.	Gentle Shepherd MCC, Phoenix, AZ	$1,007.67
19.	St. John The Apostle MCC, Ft. Myers, FL	$ 817.54
20.	MCC New Haven, New Haven, CT	$ 789.64

[These figures reflect the 10 percent of each local church's monthly income that is reported to the Fellowship headquarters.]

TOP 20 PER CAPITA - APRIL 1997

1.	Resurrection MCC, Chicago, IL	$58.14
2.	MCC of Greater Hayward, San Lorenzo, CA	$50.77
3.	Maranatha Fellowship MCC, Houston, TX	$46.66
4.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA	$40.78
5.	MCC of the Redwood Empire, Guerneville, CA	$36.90
6.	Spirit of Peace MCC, Prairie Grove, AR	$36.80
7.	Eternal Light MCC, Lacey, WA	$35.38
8.	MCC Charleston, Charleston, SC	$29.96
9.	Gentle Shepherd MCC, Phoenix, AZ	$29.29
10.	Gentle Souls MCC, Kansas City, MO	$29.02
11.	All Saints MCC of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA	$28.71
12.	MCC of Northern Virginia, Falls Church, VA	$26.32
13.	MCC New Haven, New Haven, CT	$25.72
14.	MCC of the Incarnation, Oak Park, IL	$25.05
15.	Harvest MCC, Denton, TX	$23.96
16.	MCC Hickory, Hickory, NC	$23.63
17.	Disciples of the Trinity MCC, Savannah, GA	$23.07
18.	Lexington's MCC, Lexington, KY	$22.87
19.	MCC Amarillo, Amarillo, TX	$22.82
20.	New Life MCC, Charlotte, NC	$22.72

[These figures reflect the average individual weekly offering to the local church.]